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PRAGMATIC EQUIVALENCE AS A CHALLENGE FOR INTERPRETERS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The article offers a discourse-analytic examination of original (English) and interpreted (Polish) versions of several extracts from plenary speeches by three Members of the European Parliament (Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Nigel Farage and Guy Verhofstadt). Controversial statements that have met with adverse reactions of the audience and/or the media are selected for analysis. The author endeavours to assess the degree to which pragmatic equivalence has been achieved by Polish interpreters. Another pertinent question is whether the identified shifts are due to some systemic differences between the pragmatics of the source and target languages or to other factors, such as the constraints typical for simultaneous interpreting or specific, local problems.

Keywords: *simultaneous interpreting, European Parliament, discourse analysis, equivalence, pragmatics*

1. Introduction

It is rarely acknowledged that much of political discourse nowadays is mediated through translation and/or interpretation. Translated politicians' remarks are often quoted and commented by the media, and sometimes even analyzed by linguists, as if they were original statements, without taking into consideration shifts that could have occurred in the translation process (see Schäffner 2004 for examples). The European Union in particular, with its 24 official languages, is a political entity that relies heavily on translation and interpreting in its everyday functioning (see, e.g. Koskinen 2008 and Duflou 2016 for some details on the EU translation and interpreting services, respectively). The plenary sessions of the European Parliament (EP) act as "the

icon of multilingual European democracy” (Kent 2014: 163). At the same time, they likely function as an epitome of simultaneous conference interpreting for many Europeans, as extracts are often shown by the media accompanied with interpretation into the audience’s native language. These sessions are also made available on the EP’s website to be watched live or afterwards, in original or with interpretation into any of the official languages. The interpretations on the website are accompanied with a disclaimer to the effect that they do not constitute an authentic record of the proceedings and are only meant to facilitate communication among the participants. However, their status is dubious in practice, especially since 2012, when the EP decided to publish its verbatim reports exclusively in original. In fact, EP interpreters not only make the multilingual debate possible in the first place, but their output is also often broadcast by TV channels and used by the media to report on debates that attracted the interest of the general public, in the absence of written translations of speeches.

The main aim of this paper is to examine several examples of original statements in English and their interpretations into Polish from EP plenary debates that constituted a challenge for interpreters due to their controversial content as well as, in most cases, other constraints typical for simultaneous interpreting in this very setting. I will discuss these examples within the framework of Discourse Analysis and consider the degree to which pragmatic equivalence has been achieved. I will also try to determine if the identified shifts are due to some systemic differences between the pragmatics of the source and target languages or to other factors. In order to provide the background to this analysis, the concept of pragmatic equivalence in translation and interpreting will be outlined first, followed by an account on intercultural pragmatics that highlights some divergences between English and Polish.

2. Pragmatic equivalence

Equivalence is one of the central concepts of Translation Studies, at the same time, it is one that remains elusive and difficult to define. It is often described in very general terms as a relationship that is believed to exist between two texts in different languages (or other codes) if one is regarded as the translation of the other (see Kenny 2009, Pym 2011: 81). In order to go into any detail, scholars usually feel the need to further specify what kind of equivalence is meant, for instance by restricting the level on which it operates (e.g. Kade’s 1968 typology of lexical equivalence). In the context of Bible translation, in 1960s Eugene Nida developed the concept of dynamic equivalence as opposed to formal equivalence. The former, which Nida clearly favours, aims to guarantee complete intelligibility of the target language text to a specific addressee, whereas the latter aspires to transfer the content of the source language text while at the same time preserving much of its form: “The

older focus of translating was the form of the message, and translators took particular delight in being able to reproduce stylistic specialties [...]. The new focus, however, has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor" (Nida and Taber 1969: 1). Therefore, ideally the translator wishing to achieve dynamic equivalence should look at or at least hypothesize the reaction of the source language addressees at whom the message was originally directed (a task that may be very difficult for Bible translators) and propose solutions to which the intended target language audience will react in the same way.

Nida's dynamic equivalence is very close to the concept of pragmatic equivalence developed by other authors. For Koller, "the achievement of pragmatic equivalence [...] means translating the text for a particular readership" (1989: 102). The requirements are different than for other types of equivalence that this author distinguishes, i.e. formal, text-normative, connotative or denotative equivalence, and may involve editing the text by the translator for the sake of its comprehensibility. Baker devotes a whole chapter of her well-known book to pragmatic equivalence, in which she offers a detailed discussion (with numerous practical examples) of adjustments that have to be introduced by translators "in order to avoid conveying the wrong implicatures or even failing to make sense altogether" (1992: 250). She warns about divergences in pragmatics displayed by various languages, and that failure to recognize them may lead to the situation when "a literal or near-literal transfer of form distorts the original implicature or conveys a different one" (ibid: 230). House refers to such pragmatic adjustments using the metaphor of "cultural filter", which is "a means of capturing socio-cultural differences in expectation norms and stylistic conventions between the source and target linguistic-cultural communities" (2015: 68).

The dichotomy between two basic types of equivalence (dynamic/formal) is mirrored in Interpreting Studies by the dichotomy between meaning-based and form-based interpreting. In 1960s, Danica Seleskovitch accompanied by other teachers from ESIT (the so-called Paris school) outlined their *théorie du sens*. According to this approach, between the stages of the interpreting process that are observable (listening to the source text and production of the target text) there is always the third stage referred to as "deverbalization", occurring in the interpreter's mind. During this stage "the interpreter reduces the speaker's formulated thought to an unformulated thought. Once this is done there is nothing to prevent him from expressing the thought, which is now his own, just as spontaneously as expressing his own ideas when he is not interpreting" (Seleskovitch 1978: 42). Deverbalisation implies that the message delivered by the interpreter should not show any trace of being originally formulated in another language and culture, as the form of the source language text has been completely erased from the interpreter's mind.

Subsequent scholarly appraisal of *théorie du sens* (e.g. Isham 1994, Dam 2001) suggests that deverbalization is optional rather than obligatory, and that form-based interpretations are not necessarily characterized by lower quality.

Daniel Gile favours meaning-based interpreting as “going through meaning instead of seeking direct linguistic correspondences allows better comprehension of the speaker’s intentions and better reformulation in the target language with less linguistic interference and more idiomatic expression” (2009: 208). However, he also makes allowances for form-based interpreting as a coping tactic that may be used for cognate languages in case of the interpreter’s tiredness or very fast delivery rate. Gile (2003) defends the concept of deverbalization (albeit as a prescriptive paradigm rather than a descriptive theory) because it can serve as a useful didactic model to make trainees realize what approach to the task they should take. Emphasis is put on the intended communicative aim of the source text (i.e. its illocution, in pragmatic terms) rather than its linguistic form.

Pragmatic equivalence may seem much easier to achieve by interpreters than by translators. After all, interpreters are immersed in the communication that they transfer, they share the time and, except for remote interpreting, the place with authors of source texts (speakers) and with target language addressees, often also with source language addressees (if the audience is multilingual). The situational context in which the source and target texts are produced are the same. Interpreters also have at their disposal a very important pragmatic tool, namely tone of voice, both the speaker’s and their own (see Kučiš and Majhenič 2018 for an interesting discussion of the degree to which interpreters copy speakers’ pitch and volume). By contrast, translators relatively rarely have access to authors and readers, and they sometimes deal with texts originally directed at an audience whose response may be impossible to gauge (e.g. written very long ago, cf. Bible translation).

However, we have to consider the constraints of interpreting, which are particularly acute for simultaneous interpreting (see, e.g., Gumul and Łyda 2007, Gumul 2011). Due to the time constraint, the interpreter only has split seconds to take a final decision and cannot ponder long over several possible solutions, consult external sources, etc. The linearity constraint, in turn, means that the interpreter does not know the text as a whole and apprehends it step by step, consequently, the speaker’s real intention may sometimes become clear only gradually. The task is so challenging and takes up so much cognitive resources that, in the words of Gile, “performance problems arise not only in fast, informationally dense or highly technical speeches, but also in clear, slow speech segments in which no particular obstacles are identified” (2009: 157). And a typical speaker in the EP plenary, the setting we are interested in, will both talk at breakneck speed and try to squeeze in possibly much content, not to mention the fact that many do it in a non-native language (see, e.g. Cosmidou 2013, Seeber 2017).

3. Intercultural pragmatics

Interlocutors communicating across cultures often assume that the pragmatics of the foreign language they have learned must be similar to that of their mother tongue. Miller (2008) shows that in a company employing both Japanese and Americans (who communicate in English) the high degree of vagueness used by the Japanese to express their criticism is problematic. For instance, an American criticizing his Japanese colleagues' work was perceived as tactless even though he made efforts to be indirect. Another American, on the other hand, was very surprised to learn that his project for an ad had been rejected as his Japanese boss's comments on it a few days earlier had not seemed negative.

Interpreters who mediate between politicians from distant cultures often face the dilemma whether they should stay close to the speaker's words or make pragmatic adjustments. The former option is relatively safe for interpreters, but the risk of misunderstandings is high (cf. Nixon's mistaken belief that he was made a promise by the Japanese PM, Torikai 2009: 39-43). The latter ensures that the speaker's intentions get across, on the other hand, the interpreter is prone to become a scapegoat for taking liberties with the original if the final result of the talks is unsatisfactory (see Morin 2011).

Pragmatic differences do exist also for languages and cultures that seem quite close, i.e. Polish and Anglo-Saxon. They are not so omnipresent, but therefore, perhaps easier to overlook. Although English is certainly more direct than Japanese, Slavic languages tend to be even more direct. For example, Ogiermann (2009) explored English, German, Polish and Russian requests by means of a discourse completion test (DCT) and her results show that the popularity of direct imperative constructions across the four languages varies a lot. Such constructions are used very rarely in English and German (4% and 5%, respectively), but occur fairly frequently in Polish (20%) and even more so in Russian (35%).

Wierzbicka (2003: 23) provides a fine example of a hearty welcome offered by a Polish conference organizer to an Australian guest of honour: *Mrs Vanessa!* (first name) *Please! Sit! Sit!*, and explains how the inappropriateness of this utterance results from the pragmatics of the speaker's native language. In Polish, *pan/pani* (equivalent to *Mr/Mrs*) can be combined with the addressee's first name to form a term of address that is neither formal nor very intimate. Furthermore, imperatives of action verbs (especially accompanied by *proszę* – *please*) may appear even in polite requests, so the speaker does not realize that his/her offer in English strongly resembles a command addressed to a dog. Wierzbicka proceeds to discuss numerous examples of advice, requests, tag questions, opinions and exclamations that, when translated literally from English into Polish or vice-versa, not only display a marked difference in politeness level, but will often even be interpreted as different speech acts (e.g., a question, not an offer or an order, not a request). For instance, the typical Polish way of

offering food to one's guests, if transferred closely into English, looks very much like an imposition, forcing them to eat.

On a similar note, the book by Jakubowska (1999) offers an account on a wide range of polite formulae in English and in Polish: terms of address, greetings and farewells, thanks, apologies, compliments, congratulations, good wishes, toasts and condolences (including responses to these speech acts that require one). Although there are many similarities, the author highlights the observed differences as a source of difficulty for Polish learners of English. They are visible, for example, in responses to questions of the *How are you?* type, which present an overwhelmingly positive self-image in English and a tendency to complain in Polish. Compliment responses as well display a different pattern, with Poles much more frequently rejecting or downgrading complements. However, we need to remember that for 30 years since the fall of communism the Polish language has evolved considerably, and many of the recent changes are due to the strong influence of English. This influence results both from extensive exposure and from the prestige enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxon culture, and it reaches not only the level of lexis, but also the levels that would seem more resistible to change, including pragmatics (see Arabski 2007). For example, Polish compliment responses have been drifting closer to the Anglo-Saxon standards.

It may seem that many of the pragmatic differences between English and Polish are not pertinent to political discourse, as they mostly appear in speech acts that are restricted to 'private' communication. However, there are also areas that may be relevant, for example, opinion markers such as *I (don't) think*, *I believe* that are very commonly used in English due to "a desire not to put one's view too bluntly, and not to sound too abrupt and quarrelsome" (Wierzbicka 2003: 43). This is not to say that they do not exist in Polish, but they are used relatively rarely and tend to signal genuine doubt there. Consequently, if an English speech containing many opinion markers is transferred into Polish without omitting any of them, the speaker may appear much more hesitant than s/he really is. On the other hand, Poles and other Slavic users of English as a foreign language are perceived to "speak in [...] a blunt, dogmatic and bossy way" (ibid: 69).

Also terms of address may pose a major challenge, as rightly pointed out by Baker (1992), as Polish, unlike English, is a T/V language which, in addition, possesses a relatively complex system of honorifics. Kostro and Wróblewska-Pawlak (2011), for example, analyze a Polish presidential debate between Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński from 2005, where the interlocutors (who know each other personally as former anti-communist oppositionists) subtly switch between T and V forms and choose from among a wide range of honorifics to undermine each other's position under the pretence of overt politeness. This very interesting and complex pragmatic effect would be impossible to reflect in English without extensive glosses on the intricacies of the Polish terms of address. By analogy, when interpreting from English into a T/V language the

interpreter faced with *you* is forced to choose among a number of possible renderings in the target language (see, e.g., Boyd 2016).

We could assume that national parliaments act as the patterns on which MEPs model their verbal behaviours, and, therefore, that the EP debates constitute a hybrid of the national traditions formed in the member states over time. For space limits, pragmatic differences between the Polish and the English parliamentary discourses cannot be discussed here in detail (see Bartłomiejczyk 2016: 114-125 instead). An analysis of existing research shows that these differences appear to be minor compared with the similarities. Overall, the Polish parliamentary discourse seems somewhat more face threatening, so when interpreting statements from English the interpreter might feel justified in making adjustments resulting in strengthened illocutionary force, especially by increasing directness and omitting hedges. However, possible influence of MEPs' native languages on their English used as a lingua franca is another factor that may play a role.

4. Do interpreters tame the troublemakers? A comparative analysis of extracts from controversial plenary speeches

My recent book (Bartłomiejczyk 2016) offers a detailed account on how face-threat present in the Eurosceptic discourse of MEPs from the United Kingdom Independence Party is rendered by Polish EP interpreters. The analysed corpus comes from the years 2008-2012 and covers all the plenary contributions of three UKIP MEPs (Nigel Farage, Godfrey Bloom and John Bufton) falling within this timeframe. What I would like to present here are several interesting examples of more recent controversial utterances originally delivered in English that are not discussed in the book. They are highlights from contributions of three 'colourful personalities' of the EP who come from different political backgrounds and different countries (Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Nigel Farage and Guy Verhofstadt). Two of them use English as a non-native language. The extracts have been selected exclusively on the basis of the source language versions, as the aim is not to show specific, pre-determined types of shifts. Rather, the author believes that a detailed, qualitative bottom-up analysis offers more explanatory power.

Clearly, the immediate goal of the three speakers is to shock at least part of the audience in the EP and, in some cases, to attack its individual members. The likely ultimate goal is to gain recognition and support from potential voters (reachable by the media), as they often appreciate breaking the norms of politeness as an attractive part of politicians' image (see Sobczak 2016: 46). For each of the discussed examples, the achievement of the former goal is confirmed by the strong reaction of the audience (e.g. the speaker is severely admonished by the chairing President or other participants of the debate, and/or there are public calls to punish him). The discourse-analytic examination is

aimed to show the extent to which pragmatic equivalence has been achieved by the Polish interpreter in each individual case. I have further verified the media coverage in English and Polish (through a Google search) to try to confirm or reject some of the hypotheses that result from analysis with a scope limited to the relevant debate itself.

4.1. Janusz Korwin-Mikke's political incorrectness

Janusz Korwin-Mikke is an extremely anti-EU and anti-democratic Polish MEP who was elected to the EP in 2014 and resigned in March 2018. On winning the seat, he declared: "I will make so much trouble in the EP for the first three months that they will remember me for a long time" (Chwędzuc-Szulc, Zaremba 2015: 131). The main method to achieve this goal are racist and sexist statements, and I will present one example falling into each of these categories, respectively. The utterances under analysis here are among those for which Korwin-Mikke got officially punished with a fine or a suspension, or both, for breaking the European Parliament rules that require MEPs "not [to] resort to defamatory, racist or xenophobic language or behaviour in parliamentary debates". It is already his third parliamentary contribution, delivered on 16 July 2014, that made the headlines and earned him a disciplinary fine of 3000 EUR:

- (1) *Mr President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, introducing the first bill on the minimum wage, said, frankly, that it was to protect industry in the North from competition from cheap labour from the South. Four millions human lost jobs. Well, it was four million niggers but now we have twenty millions Europeans who are the negroes of Europe – four... twenty millions young people are negroes from Europe, yes. They are treating... treated like Negroes.*
- (1a) *@ Prezydent Kennedy @ stwierdził w swoim czasie, @ że konkurencyjność Połu- że konkurencyjność Północy zależy od taniej siły roboczej na Południu. W USA. Na Po- Południu mieliśmy do czynienia z ta- tanią ś- siłą roboczą Murzynów, a teraz w Europie mamy do czynienia z podobną sytuacją. Obywatele Europy Południowej odgrywają taką rolę Murzynów Europy.*

The speaker makes a parallel between the present situation in the EU and events in the US several decades ago. Interestingly, the supposed racism present in this statement relies only on the vocabulary, as the speaker actually does not criticize Afro-Americans. What he does is repeatedly using terms that have long become "banned" in the English language (*Negroes*, and, even worse, *niggers*). The speaker's obviously non-native accent, combined with the grammatical mistakes, may raise doubts whether he is completely aware of the offensive potential of the words he is using, and EP interpreters may well (still)

remain blissfully unaware of Korwin-Mikke's declared intentions to act as a troublemaker in the EP. The audience seem to be mesmerized for a while, and only after the speaker utters the word *negroes* for the third time do they begin to heckle. After one more sentence, the chairing president cuts off the speaker's microphone, and asks him to use words that are appropriate for the Chamber.

When we focus on the vocabulary that caused the stir, we see that the Polish interpreter settles on the term *Murzyni*, repeated twice. Disregarding the reduction in the number of occurrences (from four to two), can this word be considered a pragmatic equivalent of *niggers* and *Negroes*? Definitely not of the former. As pointed out by Hughes, "*nigger* remains one of the few genuinely taboo words for the majority of people" (2010: 152). It evokes strong associations with slavery and, in the US, there were even some calls to remove it from modern editions of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. At the same time, it is being reclaimed by many Afro-Americans themselves, e.g. hip-hop stars. As Poles have quite different (considerably more limited) historical experiences of direct contact with Africans, it is problematic to find a term that would be as culturally loaded and would evoke the same emotions. However, the speaker decided on using an extremely offensive word, and therefore, in the search for pragmatic equivalence we should turn to vocabulary used by racists in Poland when they mean to cause offence. Many translators of Mark Twain settle on *czarnuch* (Mochocka 2018). We could also look for possible pragmatic equivalents among the 20+ derogatory terms for Africans collected in Peisert's (1992) survey, especially the more popular ones (*asfalty*, *bambusy*, *smoluchy*).

As for the word *Murzyn* in the Polish language, it causes much controversy nowadays. *Murzyn* originates from Latin *Maurus* and is a cognate of *Moor*. Its status has clearly been changing over recent years, from a word that was predominantly perceived as neutral and that Łaziński (2007) hoped to preserve in the Polish language as a useful one, to a word that blacks living in Poland do not wish to hear and one that should best be avoided in the public debate (Ohia 2013, Łaziński 2014). It is clearly falling out of favour, however, it is not marked as offensive in the on-line version of the authoritative PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language. Łaziński (2014: 140) points out that it is definitely not a slur and should not be treated as such, especially if uttered by the older generation or the young contesting political correctness. Consequently, *Murzyn* is perhaps going the same way that *Negro* went in the English language several decades ago, but cannot, at present, be regarded as its close counterpart.

Overall, the perlocutionary effects of the English version containing the undisputable racial slur *nigger* and the offensive and outdated *Negro* and the Polish version containing the dubious word *Murzyn* are highly divergent. In the interpretation, the lexical choice seems even more justifiable due to the fact that the word (spelled *murzyn*) may also be used to mean someone who is unfairly taken advantage of. For those who listen only to the Polish version, the decision to punish Korwin-Mikke for his utterance may appear quite absurd and

indicative of EU's totalitarian tendencies. The same applies to readers of several Polish newspapers which apparently relied on the interpretation, implying that *Murzyni* was an accurate translation, e.g. *Newsweek* ("Korwin-Mikke ukarany za użycie słowa 'Murzyni' na sesji PE") or *Super Express* ("Janusz Korwin-Mikke ukarany za "Murzynów Europy?!"), which, actually, after the sensational title also explains to the readers that the word used in the original was *niggers*, which translates into Polish as *czarnuchy*. The title in *Wprost*, on the other hand, reads "Korwin-Mikke ukarany za 'czarnuchów'" and the magazine also uses their own translation of the offensive passage. The unwillingness of some of the Polish media to go any deeper into the matter of the objectionable vocabulary played into Korwin-Mikke's hands, as he eagerly grabbed at the opportunity to present himself as a victim of persecution whose freedom of speech is taken away.

Before we blame the interpreter, however, we have to consider the constraints likely to play a role in this particular case. The text directly preceding the relevant vocabulary puts a considerable strain on the interpreter's cognitive resources, as it refers to a fairly obscure historical event (unlikely to constitute a part of an average interpreter's background knowledge) and, moreover, contains numbers, notorious "problem triggers", to use Gile's (2009) term. The delivery rate is about 127 words per minute, which is relatively low for EP plenaries; however, the speaker's strong non-native accent may make comprehension more difficult. The interpreter produces several disfluencies, i.e. voiced hesitations (marked as @ in the transcript) and false starts that may be seen as evidence of his problems. However, he manages to offer a condensed version, omitting the occasion on which Kennedy made his statement and all the numbers (i.e. the information that may well be regarded as less relevant). Although the interpreter is not speaking at the moment when Korwin-Mikke says *niggers*, we still have to consider the phonetic similarity between *niggers* and *negroes* as a confusing factor, probably aggravated by the fact that the latter word is repeated three times and, furthermore, by the speaker's non-native accent. In the light of the above, it seems quite understandable that the interpreter settles on a 'safer' option, much less politically incorrect than the original. Toning down Korwin-Mikke's choice of vocabulary might even not be the interpreter's intention, but rather a cumulative effect of a few problem triggers present in this fragment.

Another passage which I am going to discuss here was delivered on 1 March 2017 as a blue card question to MEP Iratxe García Pérez, who has just complained that in Europe, women earn on average 16% less than men doing the same job. It is another utterance for which Korwin-Mikke was punished, even more severely than previously (suspension for 10 days and a fine of over 9000 EUR)¹. It triggered an on-line petition asking the EP to punish Korwin-

¹ In May 2018, however, the General Court of the European Union revoked these punishments, arguing that "the relevant provisions of the rules of procedure of the parliament did not justify an MEP being penalised for comments made in the exercise of his parliamentary functions".

-Mikke that was signed by nearly one million people, and caused the biggest uproar in the media as compared with other politically incorrect remarks by this politician.

- (2) *Do you know which was the place in the Polish theoretical physics Olympiad, the first place of women, of girls? I can tell you: 800. Do you know how many women are in the first 100 of chess players? I tell you: not one. And of course... of course women must earn less than men because they are weaker, they are smaller, they are less intelligent, and they must earn less. That's all.*
- (2a) *Czy wie pani, jakie było miejsce w w @ teoretycznej @ olimpiadzie... pierwsze miejsce zajmowały kobiety w olimpiadzie z fizyki teoretycznej? Osiemset. Ile kobiet są w pierwszej setce graczy szachowych? Żadnej. I oczywiście kobiety muszą zarabiać mniej niż mężczyźni, bo są słabsze, mniejsze, mniej inteligentne. No, muszą zarabiać mniej. No, takie jest życie.*

The offending statement follows a more complex introduction presenting some numerical data meant to prove the main point, but this statement itself is formulated very clearly. It contains no complex vocabulary or syntactic structures, so, at least theoretically, it should not constitute a major problem for interpreters (apart from Korwin-Mikke's accent, to which EP interpreters possibly got accustomed by this time). The delivery rate is somewhat higher than for the previous passage, about 146 words per minute. The political incorrectness (sexism) relies not on vocabulary (although Korwin-Mikke is known to use sexist vocabulary, too – see Kuros 2011), but purely on the content.

The introduction proves more difficult for the interpreter than the main point, but he manages to transfer the rhetorical questions and the answers accurately, including numbers. There are some problems with Polish grammar here that should not hinder comprehension, and a large part of the first question is started anew. When we look at the offensive fragment, the interpretation seems very close to the original. The interpreter renders all three criticisms of women faithfully and in the same order. He also repeats twice, as Korwin-Mikke himself, the assertion that women must earn less, which preserves the original emphasis. The presentational aspects leave nothing to be desired at this point, the interpreter's voice is confident and devoid of any disfluencies. So far so good, however, something interesting happens at the very end of this tirade: Korwin-Mikke's categorical *That's all* is rendered as *No, takie jest życie* 'well, this is life'. This adds a slightly different overtone, as the phrase is typically used in Polish to comment on the status quo that the speaker considers undesirable but, at the same time, impossible to change. Possibly, the interpreter's own view on the matter of unequal pay seeped through at this moment, blunting the edge of Korwin-Mikke's chauvinism to some degree.

Considering this mitigating move, the perlocutionary effect of the Polish interpretation might be slightly weaker, especially if combined with possibly

higher acceptability of sexist statements in Poland than in the English-speaking countries due to more widespread sexist views (see Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2015). This hypothesis cannot be easily confirmed by comparing the media response in English and in Polish, which seems equally negative, describing Korwin-Mikke's remark as "scandalous", "offensive", etc. However, comments by readers suggest that Korwin-Mikke's words fell on more fertile ground in Poland, as there are more positive reactions, praising the politician for "speaking the truth".

4.2. Nigel Farage, the master of ad personam arguments

Nigel Farage, who has decisively contributed to the success of the Brexit referendum, has held a seat in the EP since 1999. The former leader of UKIP is probably the most notorious MEP ever for his verbal attacks against other politicians. In particular, he focuses on those who hold important offices in the EU. His political rhetoric came under scientific scrutiny in Pierini 2018. In his most widely publicized speech from 2010, Farage barged against the newly elected President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy stating that he had "the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk". This speech has attracted a lot of attention not only from the media, but also from interpreting scholars, extracts thereof and of its various interpretations undergoing analysis in Munday (2012), Bartłomiejczyk (2016), Kučič and Majhenič (2018). Therefore, I will focus here on other, more recent contributions that run in the same vein.

Farage is widely known as a staunch opponent of Belgian MEP and former Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (see Section 4.3), and here is Farage's reaction to Verhofstadt's repeated heckling during the debate on Syria on 11 September 2013:

- (3) *Why don't you shut up and listen for a change? You must be, you really must be the vilest, rudest man in European politics. And you rant on and the chair lets you get away with it because you're the former Prime minister of Belgium!*
- (3a) *Nie no, moment. Cicho! Pan jest na- naprawdę naj- naj- najbardziej cham-skim politykiem w Europejskim Parlamencie. Tylko dlatego, że pan był premierem Belgii?*

Farage stops his lively answer to a blue-card question regarding his views on Syria in mid-sentence (*We went to war in Iraq being told that Saddam had weapons of...*) to make this dig at Verhofstadt. However, Verhofstadt is not the only person being attacked here, another target is the chairing President, who is accused (off record) of favouritism towards MEPs who used to hold important offices. The former is addressed directly (*you* is used six times in this short

fragment), the latter – indirectly (*the chair*). The delivery rate is very high, about 160 words per minute, which is definitely quite a challenge for interpreters, especially combined with the rapid change in topic. Although seemingly quite a sound bite, this particular remark by Farage has apparently not made its way to the English-speaking or Polish media, or at least the Google search does not reveal it.

The first sentence in the original qualifies as convention-driven impoliteness in accordance with Culpeper's (2011) criteria, as it is based on a mismatch between features that invite a polite interpretation (the formula *why don't you*, which serves to introduce requests in English in a conventionally indirect manner) and ones that invite an impolite one (*shut up and listen*, an impoliteness formula). The matter is even further complicated by the fact that, as rightly pointed out by Wierzbicka, in Polish "literal equivalents of sentences in the frame *Why don't you* would be interpreted as a combination of a question and a criticism", implying "unreasonable and stubborn behaviour on the part of the addressee" (2003: 32-33). In order to produce the same kind of impoliteness in Polish, therefore, we would have to search for appropriate polite formulas beyond literalness, e.g. *Czy byłby pan łaskaw dla odmiany zamknąć się i posłuchać?* 'Would you be so kind and shut up and listen for a change?'. However, the interpreter settles on a much more economical and less subtle *Cicho!* 'Quiet!', a command rather than a sarcastic request. Instead of addressing Verhofstadt all of a sudden like Farage does, the interpreter introduces the attack with a phrase that signals the speaker's impatience with the heckler.

Wierzbicka also notes that "English is fond of understatement and of hedges" (ibid: 44), while "in Polish, opinions are typically expressed fairly forcefully, and in everyday speech they tend not to be distinguished formally from statements of fact" (ibid: 41). The use of the modal verb *must* in Farage's critical opinion on Verhofstadt's character and behaviour is very characteristic for English and does not strike one as strange, it does not markedly weaken the negative opinion, either. The interpreter does not employ any opinion markers here, which is consistent with the pragmatics of Polish.

Another problem the interpreter faces is the decision on how to render *you* (on the versatility of this pronoun in English as compared with Polish, see Łaziński 2006: 57-60). It is unambiguously singular here, but we might wonder about the formality/politeness level. Normally, in a parliamentary speech the V form *pan jest* would be required. However, in combination with the angry tone of the speaker and the very negative evaluative vocabulary also the T form (*jesteś*) would be imaginable, or the mixed one (*jesteś pan*). A comparison with Polish parliamentary discourse shows that politicians occasionally lapse into such forms during verbal scuffles with their opponents, especially when speaking off the microphone (see Bartłomiejczyk 2016: 124; Sobczak 2016). The interpreter settles on the V form, and with this she seems to achieve the mixture of politeness and impoliteness that is not present at the beginning of her interpretation.

Instead of two negative adjectives, *vile* and *rude*, there is only one in the Polish interpretation: *chamski*, a very strong negative evaluation referring to someone's unacceptable manners. Verhofstadt is presented as the rudest politician in the EP, not in the whole of Europe, which perhaps limits the severity of this evaluation to some degree (there are certainly many very rude politicians who do not sit in the EP). The middle part of the original is omitted, and, in this way, some new and rather strange implicatures are created in the final rhetorical question: all Belgians are rude, or, alternatively, all PMs are rude. At the same time, the criticism addressed at the chairing President is lost completely. This omission does not make the impression of a well-planned condensed version like *Cicho!*, rather, it seems quite haphazard and considerably changes the meaning of the source text.

On the whole, the Polish interpretation conveys the fact that Farage means to offend Verhofstadt, but not his criticism of the President's way of chairing the session. Interestingly, the Polish version may be construed as a somewhat veiled criticism of Belgium, which would be consistent with Farage's general tendency to speak disparagingly of this country (see Example 5 below and Bartłomiejczyk 2016: 170) and with his pronunciation of *Belgium* in this particular case (a very strong plosive at the beginning, suggesting contempt). Consequently, we might hypothesize that the interpreter resorted to her background knowledge (Farage's dislike of Belgium) to try to reconstruct elements that she failed to hear or understand (possibly, due to excessive effort involved in transferring the impoliteness of the preceding fragment). Her version of the final part, therefore, sounds plausible in the wider context, although it cannot be regarded as a close pragmatic equivalent of its counterpart in the source text.

As another example, I would like to examine a fragment in which Farage deliberately insults not a single individual, but the whole audience. As a result, the boos after this utterance become so loud that the chairing President, Martin Schulz, has to call for order to let Farage continue. It is a part of a triumphant speech made on 28 June 2016, following the success of the Brexit referendum:

- (4) *But what I'd like to see is a grown-up and sensible attitude to how we negotiate a different relationship. Now... now, I know... I know that virtually none of you have ever done a proper job in your lives, or worked... or worked in business, or worked in trade, or, indeed, ever created a job. But listen! Just listen!*
- (4a) *Jednak chciałbym, aby to było rozsądne podejście podczas negocjacji nowych stosunków wzajemnych. Ja oczywiście wiem, wiem, że prawie nikt z państwa nigdy niczego nie zrobił w życiu dobrze i porządnie, pracą się nie skalał w biznesie, czy w handlu, czy komuś dał pracę. Ale posłuchajcie. Proszę, posłuchajcie.*

With the delivery rate of about 93 words per minute, this passage is exceptionally slow for Farage and, indeed, for EP plenaries in general. There are long pauses for rhetorical effect (the first comes after the first sentence), during

which the speaker appears to gloat as heckling in the room grows louder. This gives the interpreter the comfort he rarely enjoys to work at a relatively slow pace and to ponder longer than usual on possible solutions.

The heckling seems to be initiated by the positively evaluative phrase *a grown-up and sensible attitude*, with which the speaker creates the implicature that the present attitude of the Parliament is the opposite. Especially the first adjective here is a good tool to cause offence, as it suggests that the addressees actually act childishly (consider that condescensions are among impoliteness formulae enumerated by Culpeper 2010). This very adjective is omitted by the Polish interpreter, who only renders *sensible*. Further mitigation of this sentence results from turning the verb phrase *we negotiate* into the more indirect noun phrase *negocjacje* 'negotiations' where the agent is not mentioned. With this impersonalization, the Polish version seems considerably more detached and less likely to elicit negative reactions from the audience.

The next sentence is the one characterized by very slow delivery. This gives the interpreter enough time to do his best, and results in a version with a few additions which, possibly, are meant to compensate for his mitigation in the previous sentence. The booster *oczywiście* 'certainly' is added to *wiem* 'I know', and the latter is repeated twice in a very patronizing manner, prolonging the vowel *e*. The abundance of negation (*nikt, nigdy, niczego, nie*) is made possible by the rules of Polish grammar and it highlights the criticism more than in the original. There is enough time to render *proper* with two synonyms *dobrze i porządnie*. The mixture of politeness and impoliteness so characteristic of Farage elsewhere (but actually not present in this particular fragment) is created here by rendering the plural *you* with the V form *państwo* (although the less polite form *wy* would also be a justified choice). The elaborate, idiomatic translation *pracą się nie skalął* 'has not tainted him/herself with work' adds a dose of irony that, again, is not there in the original and presents the addressees' attitude to work in an even more negative light. Overall, in this sentence the interpreter offers more biting criticism than the speaker himself, but clearly basing on the stylistic means from Farage's repertoire.

Finally, the remark ends with two direct imperatives that could be classified as message enforcers (Culpeper 2010). They are both emphasized with the speaker's raised finger. In contrast to the previous sentence, the interpreter decides on using the plural T imperative form *posłuchajcie* (and not the more polite, but also much longer *posłuchajcie państwo* or *niech państwo posłuchają*). This seems fully justified, considering the offensiveness level resulting from general avoidance of direct imperatives in English. The addition of *proszę* 'please' to one of the imperatives (in place of *just*), on the other hand, mitigates the command so that it sounds more like a request in Polish (see Wierzbicka 2003: 34) and does not appear particularly face-threatening.

Overall, the interpreter makes both mitigating and aggravating moves for this extract and it is difficult to assess if they cancel each other out. The slow pace enables him to introduce some additions, but they may work either way

depending on the element that is added. The confident presentation without any disfluencies gives an accurate reflection of Farage's smugness, and the listeners can certainly feel offended as accused of laziness and incompetence. The English-speaking media report on this speech in more detail, stating, *inter alia*, that Farage "angered" or "enraged" his opponents by claiming they have never worked, while the Polish coverage is more general, with some media commenting on other fragments than the one discussed here.

The last extract authored by Farage on which I will focus brings face-threat to a yet different level, namely criticizing collectively a whole nation. The target of potential offense, therefore, becomes very broad and goes far beyond the audience present in the room. The remark comes from a speech delivered on 3 May 2018 (during a debate with the participation of Charles Michel, Belgian PM) in which Farage argues that people generally do not identify as Europeans, they feel allegiance to their nation states. Farage first singles out Verhofstadt as someone who surely identifies as a European, and proceeds to home in on his native Belgium.

- (5) *There may be one exception, and that could be Belgium. Because nobody ever dares to tell the truth about Belgium. Belgium is not a nation. It's an artificial creation. I know, the Brits did it, maybe once again we could be blamed. But the truth is, there are two parts of Belgium. They speak different languages, they dislike each other intensely, there's no national TV station, there's no national newspaper. Belgium is not a nation, and maybe that's why you're happy to sign up to a higher, European level. Well, if Belgium wants it, that's fine [...]*
- (5a) *Może z jednym wyjątkiem. A tym jednym wyjątkiem może być Belgia. Bo niko- nikomu nigdy nie przychodzi do głowy, żeby powiedzieć szczerze cokolwiek o Belgii. Belgia to nie jest naród, to jest coś @ sztucznego. Znowuż może Brytyjczyków można za to winić, ale tak naprawdę są dwie części Belgii, które posługują się różnymi językami, które się nienawidzą. Nie ma jednego kanału telewizyjnego, jednej gazety dla całej Belgii. Belgia nie jest jednym narodem i może dlatego właśnie Belgia wybiera szczebel europejski. Ale jak Belgia sobie tego życzy, to proszę bardzo [...]*

In spite of high speed of delivery (about 156 words per minute), the interpreter seems to follow the source text very closely. All the arguments in favour of the main claim *Belgium is not a nation* are present in the interpretation, and so is the admittance that, historically, Brits are partly responsible for the creation of such a state. Even the implicature that Brits are typically the scapegoats of the EU is transferred by the Polish interpreter, with the use of the emphatic and somewhat old-fashioned *znowuż*. Any shifts in meaning are indeed relatively subtle and mostly concern single vocabulary items.

We might wonder about the verb *dare* strongly suggesting that people know the truth about Belgium but, for some reasons, are afraid to say it aloud – therefore, their

freedom of speech is inhibited. Additionally, this verb implies that Farage himself is an exceptionally courageous politician who will say the truth, which is clearly meant to boost his own positive image. These implicatures are missing in the Polish interpretation, *nikomu nigdy nie przychodzi do głowy, żeby powiedzieć szczerze cokolwiek o Belgii* ‘it never comes to anyone’s mind to say anything frankly about Belgium’. This version rather suggests that as a matter of course, people are not frank when talking about Belgium. The argument that Belgians from the two ethnic groups *dislike each other intensely* was rendered as *się nienawidzą* ‘they hate each other’, which appears to strengthen the negative feelings Farage attributes to them.

Another point that may attract our attention is that the main claim, repeated twice by Farage in the same form, is rendered differently each time it appears: *Belgia to nie jest naród* and *Belgia nie jest jednym narodem*. While both may be assessed as valid translations, the insertion of *jednym* ‘one’ in the latter seems to slightly tone down the criticism. The numeral appears here for the third time, preceded by its use to describe a TV channel and a newspaper where Farage uses the adjective *national*. The avoidance of the Polish adjective *narodowy* (derived from *naród*, consistently used here to translate *nation*) may be due to the fact that it carries different associations and could be construed as ‘nationalist’ – *telewizja publiczna* is a more typical phrase to describe a state-owned TV station.

As for the media response, it is stronger for Example 5 than for any of the two discussed before, partly due to Verhofstadt’s post it triggered, linking politics to football. Verhofstadt predicts on Twitter that Farage will see how real Belgium is when it plays England in the World Cup. All the comments in the Polish media that I have been able to find refer to Farage’s speech only in the context of Verhofstadt’s response, and they mention that Farage’s words stung Verhofstadt rather than that they offended Belgians in general.

4.3. On the other side of the barricade:

Guy Verhofstadt, the “diehard Europhile”

Guy Verhofstadt served as the Prime Minister of Belgium in the years 1999–2008, and he was elected to the EP in 2009, and reelected in 2014. He has been the Leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and the EP’s representative in Brexit negotiations. In contrast to both Korwin-Mikke and Farage, he is a federalist supporting the transformation of the EU into an entity resembling the USA. He takes an active interest in the political situation in Poland under the rule of the Law and Justice Party, and often voices negative opinions about the developments there. In November 2017, his criticism of the Independence Day march held in Warsaw caused a considerable stir in Poland, with some of the participants suing Verhofstadt for libel and President Duda expressing his deep concern. This is how Verhofstadt started his contribution during the plenary debate devoted to the rule of law and democracy in Poland on 15 November 2017:

- (6) *Mr Legutko, why you don't stay for the debate? Why you are leaving? No, because I have to say something to you. I have to say something to you. Your attack to Mr Lewandowski I find it outrageous. If there is one sensible... If there is one sensible, reasonable, colleague of us, sometimes even a little bit boring, then it is Mr Lewandowski. And to say that he has lose his senses, well, I think it's the Polish Government that has lost his senses and not Mr Lewandowski. Saturday, Mr President, there was 60 000 fascists marched in the streets of... of Warschau. Neo-Nazis. White supremacists. And I'm not talking about Charlottesville in in America, I'm talking about Warschau, Poland, at 300 kilometres more or less of Auschwitz and Birkenau. Well, I have to tell you, I thought that it should never happened in Europe, and that it should never happened also in Poland. And certainly not in Poland, because we have not to give a lesson to the country Poland. That's not the point. It's the place where, before Magna Carta, before Habeas Corpus, it were free cities, a beacon, I should say, of of creativity and of freedom. It is the country where liberated itself from two authoritarianism, from fascism and communism, and they did it alone.*
- (6a) *Dlaczego @ nie zostają państwo na debatę? Dlaczego pan poseł wychodzi? Ja chcę do pana coś powiedzieć. Zwracam się do pana posła Legutko. Ten atak na pana posła Lewandowskiego jest oburzający, to skandaliczne. Jeżeli jest tutaj na sali jakiś rozsądny @ kolega, czasami nawet rozsądny na granicy z nudą, to jest to jest to właśnie pan poseł Lewandowski. Po- powiedzenie, że on postradał zdrowy rozsądek i postradał zmysły jest sprzeczne @ z prawdą. To polski rząd postradał zmysły. Mielśmy kilka tysięcy faszystów, neonazistów, białych suprematystów na ulicach Warszawy. Nie mówię tutaj o Charlottesville w Stanach Zjednoczonych, mówię o tym, co działo się w Warszawie, stolicy Polski. Marsz @ rozciągał się 300 kilometrów od obozu koncentracyjnego Auschwitz-Birkenau. To nie powinno nigdy wydarzyć się w Europie, nie powinno nigdy wydarzyć się w Polsce. A już tym bardziej nie w Polsce. Gdyż nie chodzi o to, aby pouczać Polskę jako kraj. Przed Magna Carta, przed Habeas Corpus były w Polsce wolne miasta, gdzie tętniło życie i twórczość. To jest kraj, który wyzwolił się spod buta dwóch opresyjnych reżimów, faszystwu i komunizmu, i dokonał tego samodzielnie.*

Like in Examples 1 and 2, Verhofstad's English is obviously non-native. The delivery rate is about 130 words per minute. The extract is long, but worth discussing in its entirety, because it contains numerous interesting pragmatic phenomena combining face-threatening and face-enhancing moves: an attack against MEP Legutko, support for MEP Lewandowski, criticism of the Polish government and the independence march (supplemented with a dig at the US), and, finally, appreciation for Poland's history.

The original contribution begins with a direct address to a specific MEP who took the floor earlier. The interpreter seems to have missed it (possibly due to the

long time lag resulting from waiting for her boothmate to finish interpreting the chair) and she apparently construes the pronoun *you* as plural, which is justified by the situational context (Legutko is leaving together with other persons). She selects the most polite form *państwo* + verb in 3rd person plural. In the next sentence, she already switches to singular, but it may be understood either as a direct, polite question to Legutko or as a rhetorical question to the whole audience. The term of address *pan poseł* ‘Mr MEP’ fully conforms to the rules of Polish politeness that dictate mentioning positions (the same rule is applied consistently also to the reference to Lewandowski later on). However, as the hall is full of MEPs, *pan poseł* without the addressee’s last name is in fact very ambiguous and that could be the reason why, instead of repeating the sentence addressed to Legutko in the original, the interpreter inserts the explanation *Zwracam się do pana posła Legutko* ‘I’m addressing Mr MEP Legutko’. On the whole, this part is more indirect and less insistent than Verhofstadt’s opening. In the same vein, the interpreter changes the personal pronoun in *your attack* into an impersonal one *ten* ‘this’. She omits the opinion marker *I find*, which, again, can be considered a fully justified pragmatic adjustment. Afterwards, she expands the highly pejorative adjective *outrageous* into two Polish synonyms, *oburzający* and *skandaliczne*.

In the description of Lewandowski, by contrast, two synonymous positive adjectives are rendered as one, *rozsądny*. The ambivalent part of the praise is transferred successfully: *czasami nawet rozsądny na granicy z nudą* ‘sometimes even reasonable bordering on boredom’. The interpreter apparently hesitates how to render *colleague of us* and decides on the less personal *kolega* without any possessive pronouns. The reported accusation towards Lewandowski is, once again, rendered twice *postradał zdrowy rozsądek i postradał zmysły* ‘he lost common sense and he lost his senses’, which looks like a search for a more accurate translation rather than strengthening of criticism.² The interpreter supplements the syntactic structure that Verhofstadt leaves unfinished (*to say that he lose his senses, well*) with a coherent conclusion *jest sprzeczne z prawdą* ‘is not true’, and proceeds to render closely the accusation against the Polish government.

The fragment that refers to the march begins with *mieliśmy* ‘we had’, which adds more personal involvement than is present in the original. The interpreter apparently does not catch the number and offers an approximation *kilka tysięcy* ‘a few thousand’, reducing the number quoted by Verhofstadt. All the three descriptions of the participants of the march are transferred closely, and so is the off-record reference to racism in the US. The interpreter adds some obvious information, i.e. that Warsaw is the capital of Poland and that

² Actually, Legutko did not question Lewandowski’s sanity, he accused him of being utterly immoral and telling lies. The English interpreter, however, introduced this particular face threat by saying *he seems to have lost control of his senses*. If the Polish interpreter followed Legutko’s speech in Polish, she might be taken by surprise when Verhofstadt reports Legutko’s words.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is a concentration camp. This does not seem superfluous and, possibly, plays the role of “padding” enabling her to adjust the time lag. The final fragment that praises Poland is rendered without any omissions and includes a very idiomatic solution *wyzwolił się spod buta dwóch opresyjnych reżimów* ‘liberated itself from under the boot of two oppressive regimes’.

What strikes one about this particular interpretation is that, as a political speech, it is probably better than the original. The interpreter has smoothed out all the rough edges both in terms of the language and the rhetoric, consequently, the speaker is presented in a more positive light than he is able to present himself when using English as a foreign language. However, the perlocutionary effect of the criticism he expresses of the march is probably weaker in the Polish interpretation due to the shift concerning the number of participants. Combined with the hearer’s background knowledge (how many people, approximately, took part in the march), the Polish version may be construed as arguing that only some of the participants were *fascists*, *neo-Nazis* and *white supremacists*. The original, on the other hand, carries the implicature that all the participants (60,000) could be described in this way, and this is the point that stirred the emotions in Poland. The Polish media reporting on the speech apparently do not rely on the interpretation alone, as they, for most part, quote the number that is given in the original. The English-speaking media, in turn, only report on it in the context of the indignation it has caused in Poland.

5. Conclusions

Discourse analysis applied to six extracts of varying length from original parliamentary contributions and their interpretations into Polish reveals important insights into mediated political discourse. The limited amount of material under analysis, however, means that very definite general conclusions cannot be drawn.

When we consider the real and hypothesized perlocution, the examined English and Polish language versions display a wide range of degrees to which pragmatic equivalence has been achieved. Example 4 probably lies at one end of this continuum (close equivalence), and Example 1 – at the other end (considerably different perlocution). The media response to controversial statements made by MEPs may sometimes offer us useful clues as to possible shifts, but should not be treated as decisive in determining whether the perlocution is the same due to, *inter alia*, differing levels of interest in particular topics in Poland and across the English-speaking world.

The main limitation of this research is that it does not allow us to determine whether EP interpreters in the Polish unit universally regard pragmatic equivalence as their priority. Examining this question would require ethnographic research methods involving active participation of these interpreters. Many of the shifts under discussion appear to result from the constraints inherent

in simultaneous interpreting or from specific problem triggers related to the fragment in question (excessive delivery rate, foreign accent, numbers) rather than from the interpreters' desire to depart from the original in pursuit of his/her own agenda (e.g. mitigation of impoliteness). Differences in the pragmatics of English and Polish pointed out by scholars focusing on intercultural pragmatics such as Jakubowska 1999 or Wierzbicka 2003 do not seem to play a major role. The material suggests that the interpreters working during EP plenary sessions are experienced enough to be able to spot and overcome such systemic differences without apparent problems.

Even the interpretations that are evaluated as pragmatically close (e.g. Examples 2 and 4) feature some shifts that would disqualify them from use in serious political journalism as quotes attributed to MEPs. This is not to say that interpreters cannot be trusted, but rather that we should take a more realistic approach to simultaneous interpreting. Examples 1 and 6 illustrate that shifts that are in fact limited to single words (*Niggers*, *sixty*) may significantly influence the perlocutionary effect of the whole speech, while, due to their brevity (and possibly also other factors such as non-native pronunciation) some words are very prone to be lost on input (see Gile 2009: 194 on signal vulnerability). Although meaning-based interpreting does not require decoding the source text word-by-word, paradoxically, political discourse features some words that need to be considered very carefully when being transferred into another language.

What this analysis shows most vividly is that the disclaimer accompanying the interpretations available on the EP website should be treated more seriously. Usually, simultaneous interpretations are adequate to ensure effective communication in EP plenaries, but political discourse is often too sophisticated and abundant in subtleties to be given full justice in another language in real time. Moreover, many plenary speakers fail to adjust their output even slightly to the needs of simultaneous interpreting (e.g. in terms of speed or choosing a language that they have mastered sufficiently). Under such circumstances, high quality interpreting may sometimes verge on the impossible.

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